

**Transcript:**  
**Black Hills Dippers**  
**May 14, 2012**

**Event:** Dippers are monitored on the Black Hills National Forest by wildlife biologists and volunteers.

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**Jeff Goldberg, Wildlife Biologist, Black Hills National Forest**

*Sounds of rushing water* It's a really fun bird species to watch if you ever get an opportunity to see one. They dip into the water. They actually go under the water to hunt these aquatic insects. They get their name, The Dipper, I mean they actually do dip. They are bouncing constantly. They've just some funny behaviors to watch. Today we are monitoring a special of bird called the American Dipper, it's actually kind of a sub-species here, it's the Black Hills Dipper, and we're monitoring them to see, ah monitoring their population to see how they're doing. This is a state threatened species, and it's one of our species of local concern here for us. The American Dipper here on the Black Hills National Forest it's a very isolated population. The next closest population is in the Big Horn Mountains which is 100 plus miles away. They are not a migratory bird, and they are strictly a riparian or a stream living bird, and there's really no connectivity between these other populations. This population here is probably, maybe 100 birds or so, individuals, and so we're very concerned about the birds here. We like to monitor the populations yearly to see how they're doing. They're very closely associated with the stream, and the health of the stream. They eat aquatic insects and so if the stream is unhealthy, if there's pollution or low water flows, whatever that might affect, the aquatic insects, it's also gonna affect the species of bird too. They also nest over water. Their nest has to be over water whether it's a natural substrate like a cliff over water or in-stream boulder over the water or on man-made structures, all the bridges and culverts going across the creek. There has been, in the past, some efforts to help the species by putting some nest boxes on the bridges and providing the extra spaces or extra places for them to build their nests to try to help the population out. We really don't have the manpower and the resources to do multiple visits to these sites. We've managed to do one visit per nest site the last couple of years, but that's really not enough to really get a full sense of what's happening with the population. So with having volunteers available to help it really increases our number of visits we can make. We can spread 'em out so we can get more of an idea of what the birds are doing. We have a middle school student with us today. He's interested in wildlife biology, I think, in his future, and this hopefully will give him a little sense of some of the things we do, and this obviously we don't do this kind of a project every day, but it was a fun opportunity to get him outdoors here and let him see some of the things we do. (takes the glare away when you look down in the water) The reason why we want to visit more than once is they will often have a second brood and sometimes even a third brood so if something happens with the first nesting attempt or even if it's a successful nesting attempt they might do it again. In fact they often do, so if we're able to do other visits and other surveys throughout the summer it really gives us more of an idea of what's happening with the population. You know they are an excellent indicator of the health of the stream. If all of a sudden we don't have nesting happening or a lot of these birds are disappearing, they're probably a good indication that something is going on with the water quality. So, in that respect I think it's very important to keep track of them. *Sounds of rushing water*